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REMARKS

Claims 1-3 and 5-20 are all the claims pending in the application. Claim 4 is canceled, above. Claims 8-20 are allowed. Claims 4-7 stand objected to only as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, and would be allowable. Claims 1, 2 and 3 stand rejected on prior art grounds. Applicants respectfully traverse these objections/rejections based on the following discussion.

I. The Prior Art Rejections

Claims 1, 2 and 3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Lines et al. (hereinafter "Lines" (U.S. Patent No. 6,320,777). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections based on the following discussion. Claim 1 has been rewritten to include some, but not all, of the limitations of allowable claim 4. Similarly, claims 5 and 6 have been written in independent form, but do not include all the limitations of the claims from which they depend. Notwithstanding that all the intervening limitations have not been incorporated into claims 1, 5, and 6, it is Applicants' position that independent claims 1, 5, and 6 are patentable over the prior art of record.

More specifically, the amendments to independent claims 1, 5, and 6 do not include many of the limitations found in dependent claim 3. Thus, these claims do not include the restriction

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that each of the macros must have "a bit line is between two search lines" or "a search line is between two bit lines." However, it is Applicants' contention that patentability does not rest on such features. Indeed, the Office Action argued that the features defined by dependent claim 3 are "inherent."

Further, Figure 8 of Lines merely provides an open bit line configuration whereby the right side BL1_R of BL1 and the right side BL2_R of BL2 are positioned relatively far apart from the respectively left sides BL1_L and BL2_L of BL1 and BL2. Bit lines on each side of the sense amplifier are at equal length to provide a balanced load during sensing. This structure allows a ternary data storage capability within the CAM cell described above in conjunction with FIG. 1.

Therefore, Figure 8 of Lines does not teach or suggest that "each of said macros includes a common match clock line shared by the CAM cells within each macro" as defined by independent claim 1; " wherein layouts of adjacent macros are inverted with respect to one another" as defined by independent claim 5; or "wherein said top wordline and said bottom wordline cross between each of said CAM macros" as defined by independent claim 6. Thus, Applicants submit that independent claim 1, 5 and 6 are patentable over the prior art of record. Further, dependent claims 2 and 7 are similarly patentable because of the additional features they define and because of their dependency from a patentable claim. In view of the foregoing, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and remove this rejection.

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II. Formal Matters and Conclusion

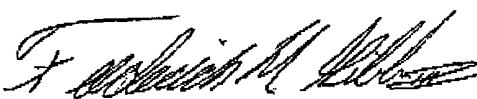
In view of the foregoing, Applicants submit that claims 1-3 and 5-20, all the claims presently pending in the application, are patentably distinct from the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary.

Please charge any deficiencies and credit any overpayments to Attorney's Deposit Account Number 09-0456.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: 12/22/03



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